ACTIVE LISTENING

In our active world of communication one cannot afford to exclude the art of listening. As a leader or member of an organization, it is important to listen to the group around you in order to be productive and/or effective. It is important to listen and correctly understand the messages the people around you provide.

 Active listening differs from hearing. Hearing is the act of perceiving audible sounds with the ear and is a passive act. Listening, on the other hand, is the active pursuit of understanding what the other person is saying and feeling.

Through active listening, the receiver tries to understand what the sender is feeling and what the message means. The listener puts personal understanding into his/her own words and feeds back to the sender for verification. It is important to provide feedback on only what the listener feels the sender’s message meant, nothing more, nothing less. This creates an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding in which the sender can explore the problem and determine a solution.

To listen actively and to understand is not passive or a simple activity.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD LISTENER:

*Be There*

Be there in heart, mind and spirit with the person. You need to hear what he/she has to say. If you don’t have the time, or don’t want to listen, wait until you do.

*Accept*

Accept the person as he/she is without judgement or reservation or putting the person in a mental box or category, even though he/she may be very different from you.

*Trust*

Trust the person’s ability to handle his or her own feelings, work through them and assist in finding solutions to his or her problems.

*Accept*

Accept the person’s feelings, however they may differ from your feelings or from what you think a person “should” feel. Remember that feelings change.

*Listen*

Don’t plan what you are going to say. Don’t think of how you can interrupt. Don’t think of how to solve the problem. DON’T REACT…LISTEN!

*Stay with the other person*

Put yourself in the other’s shoes. Understand what he/she is feeling, saying and thinking. Remain separate enough to be objective but involved enough to help